



Voting Information News

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A roundup of voting news from the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) for voters, potential voters and those who assist voters.

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Voting Assistance Officers

"To Do" This Month:

✓ Plan your Armed Forces Voters Week (AFVW) activities. Get the entire community involved and aim for 100% contact. Download AFVW poster from FVAP website at: <http://www.fvap.gov/services/afvw.html>

✓ Encourage participation in the remaining 16 primary elections and the upcoming November 2 elections. In many cases, requests for registration must be received at least 30 days prior to the election. Consult the *Voting Assistance Guide* at www.fvap.gov for state-by-state details.

✓ Stateside VAOs, ensure you have adequate supplies of the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) for deploying troops.

✓ Overseas VAOs, ensure you have adequate supplies of FWABs for voters you assist.

If your regular state absentee ballot does not arrive in time, use the The Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot

What exactly is the Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot (FWAB)? What purpose does it serve and where is it available? When can it be used and who can use it? Read on for these answers and more...

The most common barrier that citizens covered under the *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)* encounter when voting absentee is insufficient ballot transit time. Many citizens are located in remote areas around the world where mail is not delivered or picked up on a regular basis (such as sailors and marines aboard ship, and Peace Corps workers, missionaries, airmen, sailors and soldiers at remote sites).

The FWAB is pre-positioned overseas as a "back-up" ballot should a citizen not receive his or her regular ballot from the state or territory in enough time to meet state deadlines for counting (see *Suggestions* article on next page).

Under Federal provisions, a U.S. citizen may use the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot to vote for Federal offices in the

General Election if that citizen meets all three of the following conditions:

- 1. The citizen must be located outside the United States including APO and FPO addresses, and;**
- 2. The citizen must make a timely ballot request, and submit the FPCA or other state accepted form to their state of legal voting residence requesting a state absentee ballot so that the appropriate Local Election Official receives their request at least 30 days before the election. (This year the FPCA must be received on or before October 4th for the 2004 General Election), and**
- 3. The citizen has not received the regular state absentee ballot.**

In summary, the FWAB is an emergency ballot, only valid when a U.S. citizen makes a timely ballot request for the General Election, is located outside the United States (including APO and FPO addresses) and the requested absentee ballot has not been received (see "How To Use The FWAB" on next page). ☑

Absentee Voting Week - October 11 to 15, 2004

FVAP has designated October 11 to October 15, 2004 as Absentee Voting Week. During this time, VAOs are asked to announce, through various media, that voters should return their voted ballot immediately upon receiving it.

Help dispel the myth that overseas absentee votes do not count! All properly executed ballots are counted.

If overseas voters have not received their regular state ballot by Absentee Voting Week, then they should use the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB). For guidance on completing the FWAB and requirements for using the FWAB, read the articles in this issue. Page 12 of the *2004-05 Voting Assistance Guide* contains additional information (available at www.fvap.gov). ☑

Voting Assistance Officers

"To Do" This Month:

✓ Be prepared and equipped to give assistance to voters. Remind them of the Voting Information Center where they can call in to hear messages from their elected officials and candidates for Federal offices.

✓ Promote the use of the electronic transmission service for those states that accept faxing/emailing. Be familiar with the procedures in Chapter 2, page 12 and Appendix C, and follow the state procedures in Chapter 3 of the *Guide*.

✓ Post notices on bulletin boards and in high-traffic areas motivating people to register and vote. Include a point of contact name and telephone number on the notice so interested citizens will know how to obtain additional materials or information.

✓ Make sure that the installation or embassy/consulate operator knows where to refer callers who require voting assistance.

✓ Visit the FVAP's website frequently for up-to-date, on-line information and resources from the Program as well as links to other sites of interest in carrying out your duties as a VAO. The FVAP is continually updating the website: www.fvap.gov

✓ Advise citizens to include a phone number, e-mail address and a fax number (if available) on the FPCA as an alternative means for the Local Election Official to reach the applicant if needed.

How To Use The FWAB

If eligible to use this ballot, the citizen may indicate their election choices for Federal offices in the General Election. To vote this blank write-in ballot, citizens may vote for a candidate by writing in the candidate's name or writing in the name of a party affiliation (if the intention of a voter can be ascertained then, the candidate/party choices will be accepted). The FWAB is similar to the regular state absentee ballot as it includes a security envelope and a mailing envelope.

NOTE: For personal security, you may choose not to fill-in items 1.c, 1.d, and 1.e on the back of the FWAB transmittal envelope (image on page 4). However, if the state requires these items, you may write this information on a separate sheet of paper and place it inside the transmittal envelope (not the security envelope).

Place only the ballot inside the security envelope and do not write on it (image on page 3)!

FWABs are available worldwide at U.S. embassies and consulates, military

installations and overseas organizations and corporations with U.S. citizens.

Currently, the FWAB is prescribed by Federal law for use in general elections for Federal offices only. During the 2004 primaries, on an ad hoc basis, some states and jurisdictions expanded its use for Primary Elections. Eleven states have legislatively expanded its use beyond the Federal law to include use in elections other than General Elections and/or voting for offices other than Federal offices – Colorado, Connecticut, Iowa, Maryland, Montana, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia. Virginia allows the FWAB to be used from within the U.S.

Use the FWAB from overseas when the election is rapidly approaching and insufficient time exists for you to receive, vote and timely return your requested state ballot.

A sample FWAB with instructions can be found in Chapter 2 of the *Guide*. Chapter 3 provides state-specific instructions regarding proper use of the FWAB. ☑

SUGGESTIONS For Submitting The FWAB

We recommend that overseas citizens who have not received their regular state absentee ballot by the 25th day before the election (October 8, 2004), complete and submit the FWAB to their state local election official if they have met each of the requirements (see above). This will help to ensure timely receipt of their absentee ballot for Federal offices. The FWAB must be received by the local election official not later than the deadline for receipt of regular state absentee ballots for that election under state or territory law.

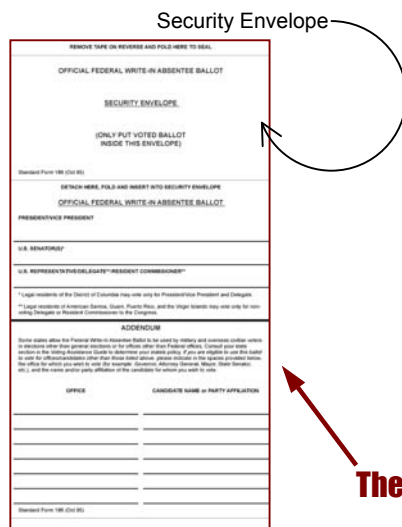
Citizens who receive their regular state absentee ballot after submitting the FWAB should vote and return the ballot immediately. Reason: If a citizen's regular state absentee ballot also arrives by the deadline for receipt of absentee ballots, generally, the state will count the regular state absentee ballot instead of the FWAB, as it will include non-Federal offices.

Citizens should carefully review the FWAB before submission to ensure that the absentee ballot complies with state's guidelines, instructions and requirements. Citizens should make sure that they are submitting the FWAB to the correct jurisdiction. Refer to Chapter 3, Section III (Where to Send It) of the *2004-05 Voting Assistance Guide*. Sign and date the ballot return envelope and obtain a notary/witness signature if the state requires it.

Make sure that you are subscribed to the *Voting Information News (VIN)* via e-mail. Why? The FVAP may enter into an ad hoc agreement with the state, or take legal action to allow expanded use of the FWAB. The FVAP will then notify citizens regarding the use of the FWAB through the *VIN*, Voting News Releases and the FVAP website. We encourage you to always vote the regular ballot regardless of its receipt date because a state may allow late counting of these ballots from overseas citizens. ☑

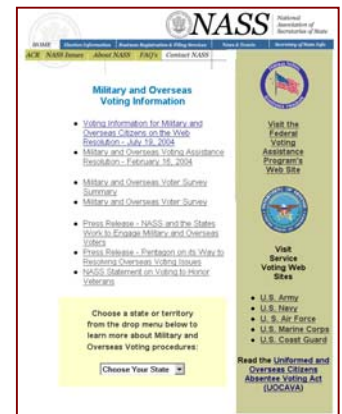
The Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot and The State Special Write-In Absentee Ballot

*Note: The State of Connecticut is not required by Federal law to accept the FWAB, though in 1996 it began accepting it in regular elections for Federal offices. In addition, a Special State Write-In Ballot is available 90 days before an election to members of the Armed Forces and dependents accompanying them, who, due to military contingencies, are unable to use regular absentee voting procedures. ☒



The Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB)

NASS is also working with the Defense Department and U.S. Postal Service to implement a plan, which the association helped develop, for expedited ballot transport.



Go to www.nass.org. Select Military and Overseas Voters

All of the above can also be reached through the DoD Voting Information Center and the FVAP Website.

